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INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY CO-OPERATION

A WORLD-OUTLOOK FROM ST. AUGUSTINE'S PALACE

BY BASIL MATHEWS

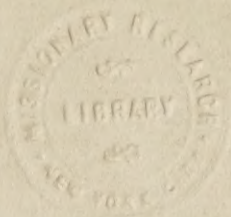
If by some happy chance it were possible for a group of such men as, - say - the Chinese statesman His Excellency W. W. Yen; Bishop Azariah from India; the African chief Khama; Dr. Nitobe, the Japanese Secretary of the League of Nations International Bureaux, to get together with the President of the United States of America and the British Prime Minister and trace their Christian Faith back to its sources, where would they first find the common spring?

They would surely discover that source in the Old Palace at Canderbury given by the heathen Saxon King fourteen centuries ago to the strange foreign missionary Augustine. There, where Augustine planned his Christian conquests, is the starting-place whence flowed the early rivulets of English Christianity that have broadened, not only into the vast current of religious life of the English speaking peoples of America and the British Commonwealth of Nations, but into the majestic river of their world-wide missionary enterprises in Asia Africa and the islands of the sea.

So there fell to the International Missionary Committee which held its first meeting at the Old Palace at Canterbury during the last week-end in July, the unique and truly wonderful experience - that within those walls of Augustine's house they looked, first, back to the early source of their common missionary work; then all over the world to the Church's missions among races of whose very existence Augustine hardly dreamed; and, lastly, forward into the mists of the future that hold and hide such supreme possibilities of Christian victory.

Last year the International Missionary Council which links the home churches and their mission boards and the mission field churches of Africa and Asia into a living and practical fellowship met at Lake Mohonk, N. Y. Out of its own membership this Council appointed a small Committee to transact any necessary business ad interim and arrange for the next biennial meeting of the Council. At the generous invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Davidson this Committee met at the Old Palace on the evening of Thursday, July 27th and remained in residence until Monday the 31st.

The group of some 20 members varied widely in nationality. - American, Canadian, Dutch, French, English, Irish, Scotch - and in denominational attachment; but the men and women facing world-wide issues in Canterbury were one in spirit and aim.



A noteworthy group of American missionary leaders were present. Dr. Arthur J. Brown (Presbyterian) Dr. James H. Franklin and Mrs. Henry W. Peabody (Baptist), Mr. Fennell P. Turner (Secretary of Foreign Missions Conference of North America), Dr. Charles Watson of Philadelphia (now President of the American University of Cairo) and the Hon. Newton Rowell, K.C. of Toronto. Baron von Boetzelaer came from Holland and Pastor Couve from Paris. The British members were Bishop King (Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) Sir Robert Williams (President of the Church Missionary Society) Dr. Forgan of Aberdeen (of the United Free Church of Scotland) Dr. Ritson (Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland), Mr. Kenneth MacLennan (Secretary of the British Conference.)

Mr. J. H. Oldham and Dr. Warnshuis (the Secretaries of the International Committee) sat on either side of Dr. John R. Mott of New York, its Chairman. It was significant that past and present members of the legislatures of three countries were among those engaged in the study of the larger aspects of missionary work.

Morning and evening prayers and mid-day intercession were, by special permission of the Archbishop, conducted by various members of the Committee in the beautiful and exquisitely restful Chapel of the Old Palace.

The business to which the Committee bent its almost incessant energies through the mornings, the late afternoons and evenings (with, I fear, sub-committees remorselessly encroaching on the midnight hours of sleep!) was of an interest at once vivid and vital.

Momentous affairs of missionary development that mark the opening of a new epoch in the story of the Christianity of Asia were reported by Dr. Mott fresh from his work in Japan and China and Mr. Oldham just back from his strenuous winter and spring in India, followed by his visit to the National Christian Conference at Shanghai.

Dr. Mott emphasised the revolutionary importance of the fact that while the great Conference in China in 1907 had no Chinese in it but was wholly composed of foreign missionaries - at the Conference at Shanghai this May out of over 1,000 delegates 565 were Chinese as against 488 foreign. A Chinese leader, Dr. Cheng Ching-yi had presided over that Conference while Dr. David Yui was Chairman of the efficient Business Committee. "The Chinese", Dr. Mott emphatically said, "have come into their own."

That Shanghai Conference (he reported) has appointed a National Christian Council of 100 members - Chinese and Foreign - with a central

secretariat of four officers (two Chinese, a man and a woman, one American and one British.)

A week or two later Dr. Mott had been present at the National Christian Conference in Tokyo similarly constituted, where they appointed a committee to approach on the one hand the separate Christian churches and on the other hand the Missions in Japan to invite them to co-operate to form a National Christian Council for Japan.

Meanwhile, earlier in this year (Mr. Oldham reported) following upon discussions held in the different provinces of India by the Representative Councils of Missions, the National Missionary Council resolved to transform itself into a National Christian Council - of which at least a half of the members would be Indian - with - if necessary funds were forthcoming - a group of five officers.

The momentous significance of these great steps lies in the fact that they are - to use Mr. Oldham's phrase about them - "spiritual adventures" in two directions; first they are enterprises in co-operation between missionary societies on a vast scale; secondly they bring the growing indigenous churches and Asiatic leadership into a new fellowship of corporate work.

Here it is only possible to catch a momentary glimpse of the vistas at once of peril and of splendid possibility that lie ahead in both those directions. They constitute an adventurous move forward in a situation where in Dr. Mott's phrase "the titanic pressure of new forces" make such adventure imperative.

Advance may be dangerous; but to stand still would certainly lead to irretrievable and calamitous disaster.

The administrative problems arising out of these three projects in India, China and Japan are obviously of a quite extraordinary complexity. A close study was given at Canterbury first of all by a sub-committee and then by a larger body, of the best lines of inter-relation between the mission boards and churches at the Home Base and the central organizations in the field, and secondly between these various bodies and the churches and missions on the field. Much of this work was technical and so to speak the labor of the mason with mallet and chisel. But as Miss Collock has put it "The International Committee has learned ever to keep before it the fact that where currents of living water are to flow, the channels need to be hewn by careful labor on well directed lines".

Another range of work of far-reaching importance and intense interest lay in the reports of the relations between Missions and Governments. The League of Nations Mandates, for instance, which have been completed this summer and which affect the welfare of the native races in mandated areas under Britain, Portugal, France and other powers in

Africa, the Near East and the Pacific, have all of them close relation to religious freedom of worship and of witness.

A wonderful record was given at Canterbury of quiet work in this connection which steadily pursued over many month has been influential in securing freedom of conscience and will have a permanent influence on the world history of Christianity. How varied the work of relationship with government is today may be illustrated by the fact that no less than eighteen different problems had been dealt with touching twelve countries or colonies under half a dozen different governments. These matters, intricate as they are and often confidential in their nature, intensified the impression that the work of Christian Missions has now found its true place in the central stream of national and international life.

The interest and vitality of these and the other subjects discussed gave emphasis to the importance of having an interim session of this Committee held between the larger biennial meetings of the International Missionary Council itself. That Council has been invited by the British members to meet in Britain next July and the invitation has been accepted.

A series of regional conferences around the Moslem rim of the Mediterranean are also being planned for, to be held probably in 1924, leading up to a general Near East Conference on the Christian Movement in relation to the Islamic world.

The long perspective which came to the Committee at Canterbury looking back from the world-wide missionary enterprise of to-day across the centuries to those small beginnings from which such great things have developed, gave to the members of the Committee and should carry to others in all the fields a new conviction of the expanding purposes of God in the world and of the inevitable triumph of the Gospel of Christ.
